telephone connections are planned for released during the year 1999-2000 and 2000 and 2001 respectively.

Villages connected with Telecommunication

†1260. SHRI JANESHWAR MISRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of villages identified by Government, which have been connected with the telecommunication system;

(b) the reasons for not achieving the targets fixed by Government;

(c) whether Government are considering to formulate new telecommunication policy; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a)

Total no. of villages in the country	607,491
Villages provided with telecom facility upto 1st December, 1999	346,842

(b) There has been shortfall in achievement as compared to the targets because of the technical difficulties encountered in MARR technology and also due to lack of basic infrastructure facilities, particularly commercial power supply and efficient road communication in the rural areas in most of the States.

(c) and (d) A new telecom policy was announced by the Government in March, 1999. There is no proposal at present to formulate new telecom policy.

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†Original Notice of the Question was received in Hindi.